

CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN AND ELDERLY INCREASED PUNISHMENT ACT

(Mr. CHRYSLER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CHRYSLER. Mr. Speaker, day after day, we see news accounts of criminals committing violent acts throughout our communities, only to walk away with little or no punishment. We only need to watch the evening news on any given night to see the havoc criminals wreak in our neighborhoods. Recently, I authored and introduced the Crimes Against Children and Elderly Increased Punishment Act, legislation that will provide for an automatic increase in the length of sentences for such criminals. This legislation amends the Violent Crime Control Act of 1994 to increase punishment for Federal crimes committed against youth ages 12 years and under and seniors ages 65 years and older.

The bill aims to send a clear signal to those who would prey upon the vulnerable in that their criminal actions will not be tolerated and will result in certain and severe punishment. Our children are the seeds of our Nation's future. Our seniors are the roots of our heritage. Increasing the penalties on those who would hurt our children and elderly will give them the protection they need and give the criminals the punishment they deserve.

THE BUDGET AND FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

(Mr. VENTO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. VENTO. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to speak for American families and for the failure of this Congress to come to grips with dealing with the budget and fiscal responsibility. The fact is that the answer that was brought to us by this Republican Congress is the wrong answer. Cutting Medicare, cutting Medicaid, cutting our education and health programs, and assaulting the environment is not the answer. What our families need are the tools to take care of one another.

They need the health care. They need sound education and retirement programs. They need their rights on the job so that they can receive a living wage. The fact is that families in this country are going to continue to suffer. We are going to continue to see the income disparity without some change to empower workers. This Congress has to wake up and smell the coffee in terms of where the American people are and what they want and what we need to do as a Congress, to get on and pass our necessary appropriation bills, to make the types of compromises that provide for meaningful welfare reform and provide for a sound fiscal policy for the next 7 years, not the Republican major-

ity walking away from the task because they cannot get there way on tax breaks for those that are well off.

That is what is happening in this country and in this Congress today. These issues ought to be the subject of congressional and Presidential debates. They ought to be the subject of this Congress. We ought to get to work and get the peoples, work done right and stop the Republican pea and shell game that is being presented as a budget solution.

THE 5-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF PERSIAN GULF WAR

(Mr. COBURN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. COBURN. Mr. Speaker, 5 years ago this month, this country put the lives of thousands of young Americans at risk in the Persian Gulf war. The war with Iraq was fought to restore Kuwait's independence, but it was also fought to preserve and protect the energy security of this country.

Five years later, we are still dependent on foreign oil for our energy needs—in fact far more dependent than we were 5 years ago.

Last year, for the first time in our Nation's history, we imported more than 50 percent of the oil consumed in this country. Meanwhile, I have domestic producers in my home State of Oklahoma who are capping marginal wells every day—burying oil and gas that will never again be recovered. It is putting Americans out of work and it is threatening our national security.

What can this Congress do to revive our domestic oil and gas industry? The first step is to allow domestic producers to compete on a level playing field. In a few days, we will be voting on this floor on a bill to reform the regulatory process in this country. Excessive regulations have strangled domestic oil and gas producers, raising their cost of production and diminishing their chances to compete. A vote for regulatory reform is a vote for the health of our domestic oil and gas industry.

I urge this Congress to release the domestic oil and gas industry from the excessive taxes and regulations that threaten our domestic energy supply and our national security.

REPUBLICAN BUDGET CUTS

(Mr. DOGGETT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, these followers of Speaker GINGRICH have threatened the health care security of millions of seniors in America with Medicare cuts. They demonstrated, as Gingrichites, such indifference to the job insecurity of American working families that now they are even being criticized within their own party.

But to top it all off, they come to this Congress today proposing to place

more hurdles in the way of our youngest Americans with reference to educational opportunities. Yes, the cuts that the propose in education are very real.

In my home town of Austin, the school district is contemplating having to cut the opportunity in half for 2,200 young Austinites with reference to their prekindergarten program, just slashing it in half solely as a result of these Federal cuts.

As one AISD official, Gloria Williams, said, if the pots gets smaller and the number of kids gets larger, we will not be able to support a full day prekindergarten program. There is no doubt we have an education deficit in this country because these followers of NEWT GINGRICH just cannot seem to learn.

AWOL CLINTON ADMINISTRATION

(Mr. RIGGS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. RIGGS. Mr. Speaker, just allow me to point out that the liberal House Democrats just do not get it. As we have spent more and more money on public education, test scores have dropped in America, but they do not see the correlation.

Mr. Speaker, the Clinton administration is AWOL in the war on drugs. Recent surveys have shown that drug use among teenagers has skyrocketed. In fact, the age of first use of drugs has gone down to age 13 and in some cases even younger than that. That really hits home with me, because I have a 14-year-old son.

Mr. Speaker, there is a reason for this though. The Clinton administration has slashed enforcement and interdiction programs and they have appointed liberal judges. The President has appointed liberal judges who care more about criminals than basic justice.

Case in point: One judge in New York, a Clinton appointee by the name of Baer, recently released an admitted drug dealer who was caught red-handed with 75 pounds of cocaine and 4 pounds of heroin.

Mr. Speaker, the President claims he never inhaled. But our children are inhaling and it is destroying their lives. The answer to our youth drug problem is not fancy press conferences. It is a President willing to institute real drug enforcement, real drug interdiction and real punishment of drug dealers.

ON EDUCATION CUTS

(Mr. PALLONE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to follow up on these education cuts.

As was stated previously, today the Republican leadership is putting forth a continuing resolution that would fund education programs for the rest of this year. But the bill is the largest cut